

1852.

VICTORIA.

## GOVERNMENT BOTANIST.

*Laid upon the Table of the Council, by the Colonial Secretary, by command of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, and ordered by the Council to be printed, 5th November, 1852.*

### COPY OF CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING THE APPOINTMENT OF WILLIAM SWAINSON, Esq., AS GOVERNMENT BOTANIST.

(Copy.)

Wollongong, Illawarra District,  
30th July, 1852.

SIR,

A circumstance has arisen in connection with the scientific results of my investigating the productions of this Colony, during the last twelve months, which induces me to submit this communication to the local Government, and which I request you will lay before it.

It is well known that a great majority of the timber, and other trees peculiar to the Australian Flora, are so difficult to discriminate in their *botanical* and therefore *certain* characters, that they have hitherto baffled the most eminent Botanists in Europe, no less than those who have carried on their investigations in this Country, so that up to this moment the "Gum Trees" remain a chaos, even after the labour bestowed upon their elucidation by such eminent men as Robert Brown, the two Cunningham's, and the most distinguished Botanists of Europe. Of this fact, no one is more sensible than the first authority perhaps on such questions, in existence—William Sharp McLeay.

Great, however, as would be the advantage to Science, if these trees were better understood, it would be much more generally useful, and therefore much more important, in an economic point of view. Their timber and bark are even now applied to many useful purposes in manufactures. But, except in a few instances, they are very imperfectly known, and this uncertainty is increased by the contradictory names locally applied to them by the common people. These facts induced me, some months ago, to confine my attention exclusively to this tribe, and I have at length, (as I believe), discovered the true principle of their variation. The time, however, is fast approaching, which I had fixed upon for returning to my family, in New Zealand; and, as I have no intention of again visiting Australia, the result of this discovery will be very limited, and these imperfect, unless some plan can be devised for continuing the investigation on an enlarged and efficient scale.

Impressed therefore with the importance that may result, both scientifically and economically, from a more extended elucidation of this subject, I am induced to offer my services to the Government of New South Wales, (in the first instance), as *Botanical Draughtsman*; the duties of which office would be chiefly, (though not exclusively), confined to the execution of outline drawings,\* including ample botanical dissections of every species of *Eucalyptus*, I may find in different parts of the Colony; these to be accompanied by separate descriptions, and prefaced by a general dissertation on the whole group; two series at least of dried specimens of the plants, (and where practicable of the bark and wood), would be prepared and preserved, as also such *artistic* pencil drawings of the trees *themselves*, as would facilitate their recognition by unscientific persons.

To give some idea of the extent and difficulty of this undertaking, I may here observe, that not many more than 40 species, (I believe), have been published, as inhabiting the whole of Australia; and most of these have such vague and unsatisfactory characters assigned to them, that they cannot be determined even by Botanists. On the other hand, in the Illawarra District *alone*, generally considered very poor in "Gum Trees," I have already discovered and determined more than 50 species, of which dissections, &c., have been made. One of them has a bark which cannot be distinguished from the cork of commerce.

With regard to the remuneration I should expect, I may observe that for many years I have continued to pursue Sciences *as now*, merely as a recreation from the more healthy duties of my Farming Establishment, in New Zealand. But a further residence in this Colony, would entail much extra expense both *there* and *here*. Travelling and living in N. S. Wales, is now become more expensive than ever. Two horses, and a man servant or guide, would be necessary for visiting remote counties, and many other facilities would be necessary to carry out this undertaking with the requisite energy for insuring (as I should hope) a brilliant result. I do not think, therefore, under all these considerations that the remuneration of £450, or even £500, for one year so occupied, will be deemed unreasonable. I could not, however, undertake to hold this Office for a longer period, and I should stipulate for the option of relinquishing it at the end of six months, should unforeseen circumstances render it necessary. It being well understood, in either case, that the materials already enumerated, would be the property of Government.

\*Sufficient hereafter to engrave from.

How far I am qualified to execute this project, it is not for me to say. The World, indeed, has long given me credit for much greater talent than I probably possess, either as the author of the Zoological Volumes, in Lardner's Cyclopaedia, or of many other works more expensive, but not less useful.

I have made a similar offer of my services to His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, to whom I am personally well known. It is a province which offers a much more ample field, since no Botanist whatever has explored it. But for many reasons, I should prefer prosecuting my researches in N. S. Wales.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

(Signed) WILLIAM SWAINSON, J. P.,  
of New Zealand.

The Honorable  
E. Deas Thomson, Esq., Colonial Secretary.  
&c., &c., &c.

(COPY.)

Wollongong, N. S. Wales,  
30th July, 1852.

SIR,

I beg to enclose you the copy of a communication which I have made to the Local Government of this Colony, relative to an investigation of the Australian Timber Trees, which if declined, I make also to the Government of Victoria, with such a modification of the terms of remuneration for my services, as the state of your province may reasonably require.

May I request that you will submit this paper for the consideration of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, and inform me of the result, at your earliest convenience, as my stay in Australia, will be entirely influenced by the results of this proposition.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) WILLIAM SWAINSON, J. P.,  
of New Zealand.

The Honorable  
The Colonial Secretary,  
&c., &c., &c.  
Melbourne.

(COPY.)

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Melbourne, 26th August 1852.

(52-3414.)

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th ultimo, offering your services to the Government of this Colony, to pursue investigations into the botanical character of the Australian Trees; and I am desired by the Lieutenant Governor to inform you, in reply, that in the event of your proposition to the Government of New South Wales, not being accepted, His Excellency would avail himself of your experience; and in that case, I am to state, for your information, that the sum of £350 per annum, with travelling expenses, would be the amount of salary, His Excellency would be enabled to offer you.

(Signed) W. LONSDALE.

W. Swainson, Esq.,  
Wollongong, N. S. W.

(COPY.)

Wollongong,  
16th September, 1852.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge your letter of the 26th ultimo, intimating that the proposition made by me to the Government of Victoria, will be accepted, provided my services have not been previously engaged by the Government of New South Wales, and that the remuneration which His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor is enabled to offer me, will be £350 per annum, with travelling expenses.

In reply, I beg to state, that as His Excellency the Governor General, (on the 20th ultimo), 'regrets that he is not in a position to avail himself of my services,' I am enabled to accept the offer, contained in your letter, of carrying on my researches under the patronage of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria.

With this understanding, I commenced on the 11th instant, a new set of drawing observations and specimens. It will be very necessary, however, to the general illustration of the subject that I should remain here for a week or ten days, to determine the characters of certain Gum Trees not yet in perfect flower. Having done this, I intend travelling from Sydney overland, suspending all further investigations, until reaching the northern frontiers of Victoria, from which point I proposed re-commencing them, and proceeding to Melbourne, by easy stages, so as to admit of my receiving a general, and not very inaccurate, acquaintance with the intervening country.

Until I have the honor of a personal interview with His Excellency, and learn more particularly his wishes as to my future proceedings, I shall continue to act on my own judgment, as to the most efficient means of accomplishing the object in view, due regard being paid to avoid unnecessary expense.

For the convenience of reference, I intend numbering my letters, which may thus be considered Official Reports of my proceedings, furnished from time to time, as circumstances may render advisable.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,  
(Signed) WILLIAM SWAINSON,

The Honorable  
The Colonial Secretary,  
&c., &c., &c.  
Victoria.

